3. ‘Unique solidarity’? The mineworkers’ delegation, 1977

The delegation had arrived in Chile just in time for May Day. Protests on the streets were banned and the junta refused permission for official unions to celebrate the radical holiday; but they could not ban a mass for the feast of St Joseph, the Worker. Three British miners donned their jackets and joined a procession of Chilean trade unionists into the cathedral. They ‘witnessed the scenes of enthusiasm and defiance as the crowd chanted freedom slogans under the eyes of the military’.2

It was the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) which sent the delegation to Chile in 1977 and it was unusual in that the idea came from within the upper ranks of the union.3 The NUM was not integrated into the Chile Solidarity Campaign as much as other unions, yet the delegation represented a very significant act of British–Chilean solidarity. By attempting to avoid what theorists would retrospectively call social movement unionism and sticking with a more stringent (yet not unaltered) industrial national idea of internationalism, the miners actually strengthened the social movement from which they were trying to remain independent. Ironically, despite loyalty to the industrial national structure, the effect of the delegation within the upper reaches of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) or International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), for example, was limited. The NUM was unable to move the TUC to take substantial action, yet inversely, their action buoyed the solidarity campaign.

Another British citizen who travelled to Chile was Jack Jones. His status and his knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of all levels of trade unions allowed him to use his (very short) time in Chile in a very different manner to the NUM. His position at the top of labour movement organisations in Britain and in the world, as well as the moral authority gained from his career since the Spanish Civil War, enabled him to use the names of organisations within his reach without being bogged down by their organisational bureaucracy. This chapter compares the two delegations: industrial national versus a strategic individual.

In 1974 the CSC embarked on a scouting mission for affiliations, but the NUM reaction towards the new solidarity organisation was far from confident.4 While

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1 Gatehouse to Bynger, October 25 1977, CSC, CSC/28/12, LHASC, Manchester.
3 It was not the only type of action undertaken by the NUM, the members of which were also enthusiastic adopters of prisoners and hosts to Chilean unionists.
4 CSC Executive Committee: Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday March 15 1974 at Seven Sisters, CSC, CSC/1/3, LHASC, Manchester.
preparing for May Day, the CSC was still not sure that NUM president Lawrence Daly would even mention Chile in his address at the rally in Trafalgar Square.\(^5\) Months later, in October of the same year, the CSC was still persistently seeking NUM affiliations at both the national and the area levels.\(^6\)

In strategy akin to peer pressure, a list of prominent unions which had already signed up to sponsor the CSC’s Trade Union Conference on Chile was sent to the NUM, and the CSC’s coercion led to the NUM’s national-level affiliation in July 1975.\(^7\) This did not, however, herald their loving commitment to the group. In fact, further evidence of the NUM detachment from the CSC structure was shown in the CSC annual general meeting for the year immediately before the delegation in 1976. Only one NUM representative attended the meeting. Other unions had sent full delegations;\(^8\) however, the NUM did have a permanent representative on the executive committee of the campaign. His name was Jack Collins.\(^9\)

Collins was a ‘lovely man’, according to Mike Gatehouse, and he was a member of the Communist Party.\(^10\) Collins was the NUM National Executive Committee representative from the Kent coalfields.\(^11\)

It is not clear why Collins was nominated to attend the CSC, but possible reasons may have included his willingness or giving the responsibility for a peripheral campaign to a small and less important region. Or it may simply have been due to Collins’ communist sympathies. Regardless of the reason, Collins attended the CSC regularly, and ‘he kept Chile on the agenda at the Mineworkers all the way through’, said Gatehouse.\(^12\)

And agendas were fairly vigorously argued at the NUM. Their nominal support of solidarity did not bring a wave of enthusiasm that overcame their reticence to be involved in a social movement. Their desire to remain separate is only understood by taking a snapshot of the union’s organisation and the main players within it.

It was essentially an industrial union, representing the majority of manual workers in a single industry. The NUM was organised by areas, within which

\(^5\) CSC Executive Committee: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday April 11 1974 at Seven Sisters.
\(^6\) CSC. Executive Committee: Analysis of Campaign Performance to Date. Discussion Document. 23/10/74.
\(^7\) In June 1975, Jack Collins attended the CSC Executive Committee as a delegate, indicating that affiliation went through. Minutes of the CSC Executive Committee meeting, held on 26th June 1976 at the House of Commons, CSC, CSC/1/5, LHASC, Manchester; National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1975 (Scarborough: NUM, 1975).
\(^8\) Through 1975–76 the unions with the most visible support at the CSC were NATSOPA, ASTMS, SOGAT, NGA, AUEW and TGWU. CSC Annual General meeting for 1976, CSC, CSC/1/12, LHASC, Manchester.
\(^9\) Minutes CCS-EC 27. 04. 76, CSC, CSC/1/5, LHASC, Manchester.
\(^10\) Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
\(^11\) At the time, Collins was one of six communists on the NUM National Executive Committee. Kent was a relatively isolated area in the NUM. Joe Gormley, Battered Cherub (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), 138.
\(^12\) Ibid.
were lodges and branches, which were almost all based on place of work: pits or collieries. Each area’s distinct history, their different-sized mines and divergent working and economic conditions led to a diverse political make-up and some inter-area rivalry. In 1975 there were 20 structural units: 14 regions and six industrial groups. Areas had considerable political and administrative autonomy from the national leadership. While the industrial activities of areas were the responsibility of the national union, the areas kept most of the union fees, and essentially carried out the day-to-day administration of the union.

Sitting on the NUM National Executive were 20 area officials, all with the same formal power. Full-time officials were elected and those posts were permanent. The NUM National Executive Committee members elected from the regions could in theory be working, rank-and-file miners, but due to reputation and the local profile necessary for electoral success, overwhelmingly full-time officials were the ones selected. While the selection of annual national conference delegations and other ballots were conducted at the pithead, ensuring very high participation, there was no set method of electing the executive members. This was a relatively undemocratic method of electing what was, in practice, the day-to-day controlling body of the union. It was also the body from which the miners who travelled to Chile were selected.

As with many unions, an annual conference was held, with the idea that it safeguarded the democratic nature of the organisation. The annual national conference brought together area delegations whose interests and votes were mandated by previously held area conferences, but the rules were extremely restrictive.

Emergency resolutions could only be submitted with the consent of 75 per cent of delegates present. No more than three resolutions and two amendments per area were allowed. Submission of resolutions was required at least 14 weeks

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13 The white-collar section (previously Colliery Officials and Staffs Association) had approximately 31,000 voting members in 1960. That section was in competition with the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX). There were also two groups within the union which held joint affiliations to other unions (TGWU and General and Municipal Workers Union). David Edelstein and Malcolm Warner, *Comparative Union Democracy: Organisation and Opposition in British and American Unions* (Westmead, UK: Gower, 1975), 210, 211–12.
14 The federal structure of the original amalgamation in 1945 still influenced the union into the 1970s. Several areas were themselves federations before the 1945 amalgamation. Ibid., 235.
17 Pithead ballots employed small, private voting booths that members had to pass through to enter the mine. They would thus turn out between 60 and 80 per cent of members—much higher than postal or branch ballots. Milligan, *The New Barons*, 115.
18 Ibid.
19 Sometimes instructed by the area council rather than the conference.
20 With this in mind, resolutions had to be palatable to the politically diverse union. Academic Martin Harrison wrote that ‘militant Areas like Scotland often try to word resolutions so innocently that they will command wide, and unsuspecting, support in the coalfields’. Harrison, in Edelstein and Warner, *Comparative Union Democracy*, 234.
prior to the conference and amendments at least six weeks in advance. These rules meant that many issues were decided before the conference. Deceptively, the actual control of the proceedings of the conference was not with the caucus of area delegations. Resolutions on economic control, or other topics that the NUM National Executive believed to be impractical, could be remitted to their own meetings. Thus the potential to launch the union into action was dependent on the politics and whim of the National Executive. This included any international action. The oscillations in the area versus national power swing wildly through the structure of union business, not least because often the amount of power relied on the character of those in leadership.²¹

At the head of the NUM were the president and general secretary, both full-time positions and roughly equal in stature and power.²² While the president was technically above the general secretary, the power balance could swing due to personality.²³

The leaders of the union in the 1970s were Lawrence Daly and Joe Gormley. Daly had been active in the CPGB until 1956, when he left over the party’s support for the Soviet Union. He was then a founding member of the Fife Socialists League, a socialist/humanist grouping associated with the New Left Review. Under that banner, he was elected Fife County Councillor in 1958. When the organisation dissolved, he joined the Labour Party, which he had previously regarded as bureaucratic and ‘over orthodox’.²⁴ Concurrently, Daly moved up the ranks of the NUM, starting in the Youth Committee of the Scottish Area followed by an election to the area’s rank-and-file council. His first full-time NUM post was in 1964 as a mineworkers’ agent for Fife, Clackmannan and Stirlingshire. To obtain that position, he defeated the communist candidate and had the support of the anti-communists (individuals and groups) of the area. One year later he was secretary of the Scottish Area, the first non-communist to hold the position for almost 20 years.

In 1968 Daly ran for NUM General Secretary against Joe Gormley. Daly was a man of charisma—so much so that he once recorded a selection of Robert Burns’ love songs for television—and this quality was no doubt put to effective use to win the election.²⁵ He ran a roughly organised campaign,

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²¹ Ibid.
²² Ibid., 214; Milligan, The New Barons, 83.
²³ Edelstein and Warner, Comparative Union Democracy, 215; Gormley, Battered Cherub, 78. Both of these full-time officials along with the vice-president were *ex officio* on the executive committee: they held no vote, except in the case of a tie, when the president held the casting vote. The president and general secretary were elected by pithead ballot, but the vice-president was elected at the annual conference. Milligan, The New Barons, 115.
²⁵ Milligan, The New Barons, 118.
utilising various left press outlets, whereas Gormley had almost no coverage at all. The largely communist-dominated regions supported Daly against the relatively right-wing Gormley, despite the former’s previous relationship with anti-communist organisations.26

Not to be held back by this defeat and in fact learning from it, Gormley ran in the 1971 presidential election against prominent Scottish communist Mick McGahey. His area executive donated £8000 towards canvassing for his election—an unheard of tactic in the NUM. And it worked. Gormley was a right-winger or ‘moderate’ (though he thought of himself as a ‘progressive’) who fought many battles, elections and otherwise, against communists at all levels of the NUM organisation.27 He sat on the BLP National Executive Committee and was the secretary of the NUM North Western Area. He was a self-proclaimed socialist by ‘gut belief’ and also pronounced himself as a strong internationalist.28 Gormley was also a BLP International Sub Committee member for 10 years, and would go on to become the vice-president of the Miners’ International Federation.29 One commentator said Gormley was ‘a reassuring personality. He lacked panache, but [could] be refreshingly blunt.’30 Mike Gatehouse remembered contradictions:

Ah Joe Gormley! Joe Gormley was a complex man, I mean he was right wing in his politics, but he was a genuine miner and it was said of him that when he went on delegations abroad, everyone else sort of boozed up in the hotels and Joe Gormley went round the mines.31

The leadership of the NUM was split between these two politically disparate men. Though Daly was said to have been a much stronger orator than Gormley, a prolonged illness in the 1970s kept him at the sidelines of the union. According to Stephen Milligan, Daly was eclipsed at conferences by McGahey (vice-president from 1972) and later by Arthur Scargill, who was a non-CPGB, hardline Marxist.32

28 Gormley, *Battered Cherub*, 47, 118.
29 Ibid., 118, 188.
30 Ibid., 118.
31 Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
32 Scargill made a visit to the United States in 1979 to the Rouge plant in Detroit to attend a rally supported by the United Auto Workers; at this rally, he urged the US trade union movement to boycott all Chilean trade. He was, however, not overly concerned with the CSC or solidarity at all. ‘There were also, I think, sections within the trade union movement who regarded the whole stuff about Chile as a bit of a diversion, and a digression. I always thought Arthur Scargill was one of those people, because although the miners as a whole were sort of supportive, Scargill, who was supposed to be on the left, actually he never said anything against but he just wasn’t particularly interested and you would have expected him to be. But maybe he wasn’t because Mick McGahey … [was] also the right wing within the miners union, notably, Joe Gormley who was a horrible man, God he was horrible, who was General Secretary of the NUM.’ Gatehouse Interview, 2007; Scargill (NUM) to Gatehouse (CSC) 16th February, 1979, CSC, CSC/11/10, LHASC, Manchester; Michael Crick, *Scargill and the Miners* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985).
The NUM organisation was large enough that it ran its own International Department, in which Vernon Jones was employed. Gormley claimed responsibility for the establishment of the department. Much of the union’s own international activity was based on Rule 3(b) of the NUM, which stated that an objective of the union was to ‘federate with and assist associations that have the same or similar objects in view’. Keeping this in mind, it is useful to note that the NUM, in many ways, did not help Chilean miners in a direct manner, but tried to prop up the Federación Industrial Nacional Minera (FINM: Chilean Mineworkers’ Federation). This approach was obviously welcomed by Chileans involved with that organisation. Hernán Cofre told the 1978 NUM conference that ‘[t]he situation of our workers is difficult. Even more difficult, perhaps, is the situation of the organisations of workers. Our Federation is virtually in chaos as far as its finances go.’

The NUM’s first act of Chile solidarity started well before their affiliation to the CSC with a resolution at the NUM National Executive on 13 September 1973, just two days after the coup. It was agreed that the NUM support the TUC and BLP condemnation of the coup and the Chilean ambassador be contacted. The 1974 NUM Conference in Llandudno, north Wales, voted 280–92 in support of a resolution calling on the British Government to sever diplomatic relations with Chile, and calling on the TUC to lend all possible support to the restoration of democracy.

In addition to resolutions, by February 1975 a proposal to send a Scottish Area NUM delegation to Chile was in circulation, supported by the NUM South Wales Area. Consistent reports thereafter emerged of NUM plans to send a delegation to Chile. The Kent, South Wales and Scottish areas of the NUM were the most consistent and vocal in their support of the CSC and also the most radical politically.

The solidarity demonstrated within the NUM and the union’s interaction with the CSC were distinct from the AUEW and the TGWU. The latter unions regarded their involvement and funding of the CSC to be vital parts of their overall

33 Gatehouse to Vernon Jones, December 27 1978, CSC, CSC/28/19, LHASC, Manchester.
34 Gormley, Battered Cherub, 188.
37 National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1974 (Llandudno: NUM, 1974). The next resolution at a NUM conference (though discussions and passing of reports always occurred every year) was in 1978, with a long resolution of support for Chile and a call for a boycott of all companies who traded with Chile. National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1978 (Torquay: NUM, 1978).
38 CSC Executive Committee Meeting held on Friday February 28 1975. NUM South Wales strongly supported the CSC.
39 Minutes of the CSC Executive Committee, 24/3/75, CSC, CSC/1/6, LHASC, Manchester.
40 Gatehouse to General Secretaries and CSC Executive delegates of affiliated Unions and Conference co-sponsors. September 30 1975, CSC, CSC/1/6, LHASC, Manchester.
approach to Chile solidarity and to internationalism. NUM solidarity, on the other hand, was dominated by independent actions framed as largely unaffected (though not uninfluenced) by the CSC or the solidarity movement. The Chile campaign encouraged the NUM’s independent action in any way it could.41

The NUM gained enough momentum from the CUT visit in 1975 to put a proposal to the TUC, but, given the attitude of the TUC International Department as described in Chapter One, they received a reply that a British representative should go as part of an international delegation.42

The wind seemed to have been expelled from the NUM delegation’s sails.

In the case of the miners, the CSC had to satisfy itself with riding the waves of enthusiasm. Gatehouse wrote in a letter to Dick Barbour-Might, long-term friend of, and activist in, the CSC:

I’m convinced that if we tout the idea [of the delegation] around for long enough, we will persuade someone to take it up, and that if a good job of preparation and reporting-back is done, a delegation could have as big a mobilising effect for solidarity as say the trade union conference last year, or the [prisoner] adoption scheme.43

And Gatehouse was confident that despite the relatively right-wing leadership of the NUM at the time, ‘there was some real feeling’ towards Chile solidarity.44

At the 1976 NUM Conference on the Isle of Man, Pedro Cornejo, CUT representative in Britain, was given a standing ovation. The CSC was deeply intertwined with the London offices of the CUT at that time and in that capacity Gatehouse had accompanied Cornejo to the conference. In this way, the CSC overcame its exclusion from formal NUM business and was able to promote the idea of a delegation. In fact, in his speech, Cornejo asked the NUM to send a delegation to investigate mines in Chile, and with this direct request, the delegation began to solidify.45 It was the culmination of gentle, extra-organisational pressure to massage just the right sort of action.

The NUM delegation was an initiative taken outside the influence, and without the blessing, of the TUC. It was also a ‘risky’ and ‘daring’ thing to do, Mike Gatehouse explained:

41 See, for example, the CSC discussion about the NUM delegation: CSC Executive Committee: Minutes of the meeting held on Friday May 2 1975 at Seven Sisters Road, CSC, CSC/1/3, LHASC, Manchester.
42 Keeping in mind the conservative forces controlling much of the TUC and the TUC International Department in particular makes this reaction unsurprising. CSC Executive Committee: Meeting of October 16 1975 at the House of Commons, CSC, CSC/1/5, LHASC, Manchester.
43 Gatehouse to Barbour-Might, July 18 1976, CSC, CSC/15/1, LHASC, Manchester.
44 Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
45 Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977[draft?], TUC, MSS.292D/980.31/7, MRC, UW, Coventry.
Delegations are quite high risk … you are going somewhere where you don’t know, where you don’t speak the language … there are absolutely no guarantees as to who you’ll meet, whether it’s official or not, let alone in conditions of dictatorship.

So it wasn’t an un-enterprising thing for the Miners to do.46

While planning the delegation, the NUM invited a speaker to the executive meeting: Julian Filochowski of the Catholic Institute for International Relations. Filochowski had recently been to Bolivia and Chile. He reported what he saw there and brought a message from the FINM: they would welcome the delegation, which would be very important to their program to make contact with other mining unions. The federation suggested ‘arrangements should be outside official Chilean channels’.47 It was a ‘secret’ delegation, according to Wilkinson,48 or, as David Jones called it, a ‘cloak-and-dagger mission’.49

The executive immediately agreed to send a donation to the FINM through a trustworthy channel,50 and furthermore that arrangements would go ahead for a delegation to Bolivia and Chile.51 No explicit aims were dictated to the delegation in the NUM executive meeting minutes. In the Finances and General Purposes Committee, the delegation was charged with the responsibility to investigate the efficacy of giving the requested larger sums of money to FINM.52

The delegation left in 1977 and represented a ‘considerable achievement’ for the campaign and the culmination of two years’ efforts.53 Four members of the National Executive Committee were to go (though three went in the end), and it was specified that these members were not to be from the foreign delegation rota.54 Journalist David Jones stated that Joe Gormley chose the

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46 Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
49 David Jones, ‘When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother Who has Lost a Son, You Can Tell Who is Telling the Truth and Who is Not’, Daily Post, 12 November 1998, 18.
50 The Finances and General Purposes Committee put this into action, donating £1000 each to the Bolivian and Chilean miners’ federations. National Union of Mineworkers (UK), Annual Report and Proceedings for the Year 1977, 116.
51 It appears that the Catholic Institute for International Relations may have been involved in the organisation of the delegation. McKay later said the trip was organised by the Catholic Church. ‘Former Miner Tells of Pinochet Horror’, Mail, 21 December 2006.
53 Jones, ‘When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother’; CSCC 14.05.77 Minutes, 1977, CSC, CSC/1/5, LHASC, Manchester.
54 Nomination for appropriate members of the delegation from appropriate committees took the form of a rota system. This functioned at national and area levels, and it meant delegations were always viewed favourably by members. Edelstein and Warner, Comparative Union Democracy, 246–7.
three delegates. Gatehouse confirmed: ‘I think largely through Gormley’s agency they hand picked two of the most right wing regional secretaries or regional figures to go.’

Gatehouse was referring to Ted McKay and Ken Toon. Despite the relatively conservative tendencies of these two, the Chilean coup had caused genuine revulsion through the whole political spectrum of the labour movement:

Ken Toone [sic] was on the right of the Party and associated with right-wing trade unionists … Nevertheless he was profoundly affected by his visit to Chile and did an enormous amount of work on behalf of the Chilean miners on his return to Britain, despite his knowledge that many of the Chilean miners he met and their leadership were Communists.

Jack Collins was not chosen to go to Chile despite his time representing the union on the CSC Executive Committee. Gatehouse remembered that he was ‘pissed off’, but he maintained his commitment to the CSC for years afterwards. Further, it was not Gormley’s ‘style’, said Gatehouse, to allow the CSC to have involvement in the organisation of the delegation and perhaps less to allow an ‘anti’ (someone who consistently voted negatively at NUM National Executive Committee meetings) to enjoy a delegation. Incidentally, Gormley’s ‘antis’ were always communists; he indicated in his autobiography that Collins clearly fell into this category. Gormley also wrote: ‘perhaps I’m a bit of a bully.’

Despite this setback, the CSC was present in the delegation in another capacity. The interpreter and organiser sent to accompany the miners was an Irish woman named Ann Browne. Gatehouse said she was ‘one of our people’. She was a blessing for the Chile cause, acknowledged Gatehouse, ‘because there is a whole art to being the accompanier of a delegation, keeping them together in one place, making sure they don’t get pissed, making sure they don’t behave badly, making sure they get to the right places on time, all of that’.

The delegation of 1977 was Browne’s first trip to Chile, but she had extensive organising experience and was educated in the Chilean situation through her

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55 Jones, ‘When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother’, 18.
56 Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
57 ‘The NUM sort of put forward what the left of the Communist Party said was right wingers for the … miners delegation to Chile: they were bloody terrific.’ Hulme Interview, 2007.
60 Gormley, Battered Cherub, 150.
61 Ibid., 78.
62 Ibid.
involvement as secretary of the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile in Britain, which was run out of Uxbridge Road, London. Again, the organised Chile solidarity movement played a tangential but influential role.

The conditions under which Browne worked in Chile were very trying. On top of chaperoning duties, she also understood in more depth what was occurring in Chile. ‘She was extraordinary’, said Gatehouse.

The NUM first applied to enter Chile officially as a union delegation, but the junta refused permission, just as they had refused entry to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) since 1975. As a CSC report heroically proclaimed: ‘But NUM was not to be put off, and determined to send its delegation with or without Pinochet’s permission.’

While the military government would not authorise the delegation, remarkably, visas were not required to enter Chile. So the miners entered “privately” rather than secretly and without asking permission from anyone’, wrote Gatehouse in 1977. There was a possibility they would be turned away at the border or deported if the nature of their mission became publicly known. The miners were not put off, despite the fact they risked more than their own safety.

The delegation spent 16 days in Latin America; six of those were in Chile. They first travelled in Bolivia and met tin miners, and then spent a short time in Peru.

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64 After the JWG was disbanded, Browne went on to work for the International Federation of Miners (MIF) in 1982 in Brussels, and was instrumental in forming that organisation’s links with Latin American miners’ unions. Gatehouse believes she was ‘very beloved by miners from all over the world because she was so good and dedicated’. Despite this, in the 1970s, Browne was referred to in NUM documents as ‘our interpreter’ rather than identified by her name. See, for example, when Ted McKay paid tribute to the interpreter in his address to the NUM 1977 Conference. ICEM, ‘Ann Browne: A Tribute’, in ICEM News Release No. 8/2000, 2000, accessed 22 August 2008, <http://www.icem.org/en/5-Mining-DGOJP/437-Ann-Browne:-A-Tribute>; Gatehouse Interview, 2007; National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1977 (Tynemouth: NUM, 1977), 467; ‘Saved Chileans to be Allowed Here: Success for Mrs Hart’, Morning Star, 16 September 1975, 5.

65 Gatehouse to Bynger, October 25 1977.


69 Bolivia was ruled by dictator General Banzer at the time. His reign included high economic growth and human rights abuses.
in order to gain entry to Chile.70 Throughout the trip they posed as tourists and then mining engineers, mining equipment salesmen or industrial archaeologists studying the old mining equipment in Chile.71 From Peru, they travelled the long road through the Atacama Desert. The Mail reported that ‘at one stage they had to be hidden among rocks on a beach next to the Pacific’ Ocean to avoid an army patrol.72

On 30 April 1977, the NUM delegation arrived in Santiago and immediately set out to contact the FINM.73 Their first impression of the streets in the capital was ‘of apparent calm and order. However … We were never taken directly to meet union officials for fear of being followed, and we never arrived until it was established that we had not been.’74

Meetings were never held in any public space and people were too scared to hold them in their houses. Ken Toon reported that ‘people we spoke to were at great personal risk of arrest if they were caught talking to us’.75 Thus, ‘contact was difficult and sometimes failed’.76 Meetings and visits to the coalmines were often in the middle of the night, described Lawrence Daly, and the men constantly had to deal with ‘security forces and all the rest of it’.77 They never stayed in one safe house more than a few hours and Ted McKay wrote simply: ‘I often wonder what would have happened to us had we been caught.’78

The delegation passed within 32 km of mines they wanted to see, but turned back because it had become too dangerous due to road checks.79 They witnessed ‘gross violation of trade union and human rights’, according to Ken Toon: ‘A physical, social, political and economic repression was being rigidly enforced.’80 There still existed a curfew on activities.81

70 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977. It was ‘frightening’ in the mining area in Bolivia, said McKie, as the military had an overt armed presence. National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1977, 469, 70.
71 ‘“Stop Aid” Demand as NUM Men Visit Bolivia and Chile’, Miner, May–June 1977, 1; Jones, ’When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother’, 18.
72 ‘Former Miner Tells of Pinochet Horror’.
73 They also met representatives of the Federation of Building Workers (FIEMC), textile workers, bakers, pensioners, metallurgical workers and peasants. None of the officials they met in these unions was recognised as official by the junta. National Union of Mineworkers (UK), ‘Trade Union and Human Rights in Chile & Bolivia’, in Report of the National Union of Mineworkers Delegation (England: NUM, 1978); ’Chile, Bolivia: “Their problems should be our problems … their achievements will be our achievements”’, Miner, June–July 1977.
74 ’Chile, Bolivia: “Their problems should be our problems”’.
76 ’Chile, Bolivia: “Their problems should be our problems”’.
77 National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1977, 467.
78 Jones, ’When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother’, 18.
79 ‘Former Miner Tells of Pinochet Horror’.
81 Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977[draft?].
Toon reported that the only place where Decree 198, which severely limited trade union activity, could not be enforced was in a place of worship.\textsuperscript{82} While there was a ban on protest in the street, the junta dared not ban a Catholic service. So, Cardinal Silva invited Chilean trade unionists to celebrate a mass for the feast of St Joseph, the Worker.\textsuperscript{83} The main cathedral in the centre of Santiago was a cavernous construction, and on 1 May 1977, more than 100 unionists gathered at one of its side entrances. The NUM members were invited to participate, despite the obvious dangers of such a meeting.\textsuperscript{84} ‘We were so moved by the mood of the people that we couldn’t just stand by and watch’, they said in their report, so they joined the unionists.\textsuperscript{85}

After a cue, the unionists moved to walk into the cathedral. Inside were well more than 2000 people, a crowd so large it overflowed into the square outside. When the unionists, with the NUM delegation among them, entered the cathedral, the whole crowd burst into ‘loud and continuous’ applause.\textsuperscript{86} They walked up the centre of the cathedral and sat in rows behind the altar. The priests blocked their view of the congregation, but also blocked the unionists from view. It was reported that they were ‘watched by Chilean secret police, the DINA. Outside, the cathedral was surrounded by machine-gun carrying police.’\textsuperscript{87}

The homily of Cardinal Silva was a pertinent and rousing speech on the importance of participatory democracy.\textsuperscript{88} As the Eucharist ended, the cathedral erupted, reveals the report, into a mass protest meeting. ‘The Cathedral resounded with shouts of “Freedom” as everyone joined in loud protest regardless of the armed police who stood at the main entrance.’\textsuperscript{89} The delegation members recalled that it was ‘an experience we won’t easily forget … We felt that we were truly hearing the voice of the people of Chile, and there could be no doubt as to whom they recognised as their leaders’.\textsuperscript{90} Toon later said that May Day in the Chilean cathedral was the highlight of the trip. Yet, it was not without intense anxiety. Ted McKay recalled: ‘When we came out onto the steps, there were troops with machine guns and tanks and I felt I could not move. There was a fear I could not describe and, at that moment, I thought we were going to get shot.’\textsuperscript{91}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{82} Report of the 109th Annual Trades Union Congress, 511.
\bibitem{83} Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977.
\bibitem{84} CSCC 14.05.77 Minutes, 1977.
\bibitem{85} Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977[draft?].
\bibitem{86} Ibid.
\bibitem{87} Stephen Kelly, ‘Chile: NUM Sees Repression and Union Solidarity at First Hand’, Tribune [UK], 13 May 1977, 16.
\bibitem{88} Cardinal Silva Henriquez, in Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977[draft?].
\bibitem{89} National Union of Mineworkers (UK), ‘Trade Union and Human Rights in Chile & Bolivia’, 21.
\bibitem{90} Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977[draft?].
\bibitem{91} Jones, ‘When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother’, 18.
\end{thebibliography}
Later, he wrote in a letter: ‘That experience in the Cathedral on May Day 1977 will stay with me for the rest of my life.’

The delegation quickly established that the junta regarded the organised labour movement as a major hurdle to the implementation of its economic regime, and that it had thus set about cleansing the movement entirely. The Government did this in a physical manner and also through laws and decrees. The NUM delegation found that workers were banned from holding meetings without a permit issued by the military, and even then, there would be a member of the military or police present. Unions were not even able to draw up rules, collect dues or collectively bargain, let alone strike or undertake more militant activities. The delegation reported that the ruling military had institutionalised the repression to such an extent that mass arrests and executions were no longer necessary.

The members of the NUM delegation educated themselves about Decree 198, which severely limited trade union activity in Chile, monitoring even their elections at factory level. But the delegation found:

\[D\]espite the devastating brutality, mass imprisonment and executions perpetrated immediately after the coup, and the subsequent permanent intimidation and ‘disappearance’ of prominent trade-unionists, some individual unions have been strong enough to survive and some union leaders strong enough to maintain their positions, though not recognised legally.

The delegation reported on the clandestine union activity they found. Small amounts of money had been collected and the occasional illegal bulletin was printed to make its way through the workplaces. Indeed, at some moments, the report of the delegation even sounded hopeful: ‘The unions dissolved or not recognised by the military are gradually imposing their presence … the fact that they were able to receive our delegation and arrange an extensive programme of activities was itself a major achievement.’

The implementation of junta policies had, however, severely altered the landscape of the Chilean labour movement. Some unions had Christian Democrats (the opposition when Allende was in power) placed at the head of their organisations as part of a puppet union structure set up by the junta.

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94 ‘Chile, Bolivia: “Their problems should be our problems”’.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
No Truck with the Chilean Junta!

There were 10 of these, unimaginatively called the ‘Group of Ten’. By mid 1976, the delegation members believed that even the Group of Ten was being more openly critical of the junta.97

The report gave an account of general statistics on inflation, wages, unemployment and other information gained through churches, rather than any in-depth discussion of actual conditions in the pit. The conditions of miners were referred to specifically only on one page of the section on Chile.

The delegation was able to visit two coalmining towns, both of which were within the Región del Bío Bío, the eighth administrative region of Chile.98 Arauco Province of Bío Bío was an established coalmining area and the British delegates visited the towns of Lebu and Lota.99 There they witnessed first hand the people’s reluctance to talk to foreigners for fear of persecution.100 The report describes the scene of arrival: ‘When we arrived in Lota heavy, torrential rain was falling. The following morning mud from the hills was flowing like rivers through the streets. Barefoot children ploughed through it on their way to school.’101

Most of the workers lived in wooden shacks, and had no means or money to build further rooms or purchase more substantial dwellings. The shack in Lebu consisted of one room for parents and up to 10 children.102 They received what Hernán Cofre would later call ‘wages of misery’: enough to barely stay alive.

The delegation described the extremely high rate of inflation and the unequal rise of wages. In their report, they noted that ‘as we walked through the streets we were struck by the number of children who went barefoot and the number of men and women selling only 2 or 3 articles of very little value’.103

What the delegates spent on a meal, the workers in Chile would not earn in a month.104 In their report, they indicated that their informants admitted to never...
seeing so much poverty. It was noted that ‘they can no longer feed their own children’. Women started soup kitchens serving one meal a day to children whose parents were unemployed, detained or disappeared. It was reported that in Santiago 30,000 children were subsisting on this service alone.106 Even with family and rent allowances, a miner would use all his income buying two sacks of flour and 900 g of sugar.107

Further, it was noted that the education system was ‘user pays’, and most people thus could not afford the correct equipment for primary school let alone university. But, said the NUM delegation report, the miners were proud that they were collectively supporting a workmate at university. In the future, the report described, he would say ‘all I have, all I am, I owe to the miners of Lebu’.108

While in Lebu the delegates attended the funeral of a miner who had died in an accident two days previously. The number of accidents had risen due to a cut of one-third of the workforce with no reduction of production levels.109

Men, women and children walked behind the coffin which was laid in a wooden cart. The miner’s workmates pulled it towards the graveyard.’110

The mineworkers collected stories of the oppression on their travels, including the murders and the military trials followed by executions. They learned of the imprisonment immediately after the coup of the Chilean miners’ leader, who told them of his torture while strung up by his thumbs.111

They spoke to a woman whose miner husband was one of six taken by the police to a prison in the next town one month after the coup. The wives of the miners travelled to the prison but were refused permission to visit. The delegation’s report in the NUM newspaper told its readers how all six miners were transferred the next day, with their hands cuffed behind their heads, to a prison in Valparaiso.112 The wives travelled to the large port city of Valparaiso and spent a day asking after their husbands. They were told eventually that the men were in another, smaller town. The women travelled there and approached the police, who sent them to the military, who, in turn, told them to go to the hospital. Their husbands’ names were registered. A doctor told them their husbands had been executed.

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105 National Union of Mineworkers (UK), ‘Trade Union and Human Rights in Chile & Bolivia’, 18; Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977 [draft?].
106 Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977 [draft?].
107 Ibid.
109 Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977 [draft?].
111 Jones, ‘When You Look into the Eyes of a Mother’, 18.
112 ‘Chile, Bolivia: “Their problems should be our problems”’. 
The women did not believe the story.

They thought their husbands were alive and being tortured, so they asked to see the bodies: ‘They were taken to the morgue where the bodies lay riddled with bullets. There was no explanation.’

In a sense, these women were lucky: their husbands had not simply been disappeared, or buried in a mass grave. They at least knew their husbands’ fates.

The British unionists concluded: ‘For us it has been a great privilege to meet with so many people of courage and determination. Their problems should be our problems, their achievement will be our achievements.’

Additionally, the NUM should be proud of itself, declared the report, because it was the first union anywhere in the world to send a delegation independent of other organisations. Jack Collins, the NUM representative to the CSC, said that in his opinion, the visit ‘was probably the most important delegation that has ever gone out from this Union of ours to a foreign country’. Gatehouse was more restrained, but he concurred years later when he said it ‘was a brave delegation … they did it and succeeded and did a good job’.

The men were clearly affected by their time in Chile. Ted McKay more recently remembered: ‘I’m now in my mid 70s so time dims the detail but there are some feelings and emotions that will stay with me always one was leaving those brave men and women behind.’

The mineworkers’ sprang into action on their return, after first being welcomed back at a NUM Executive meeting on 12 May 1977. By the June NUM Executive meeting, the full report of the delegation was received, and the extensive recommendations were adopted in full. They included publicising the findings of the delegation, press conferences and interviews. Further, it was recommended that the NUM make formal submissions to the TUC, and through that organisation, to the appropriate international organisations. These submissions would deal with the findings of the delegation and also raise the

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113 Ibid.
114 ‘Chile, Bolivia: “Their problems should be our problems”’.
115 This fact is unconfirmed. National Union of Mineworkers (UK), ‘Trade Union and Human Rights in Chile & Bolivia’, 14; Kelly, ‘Chile’, 541.
119 National Union of Mineworkers (UK). Annual Report and Proceedings for the Year 1977 (England: NUM, 1977), 128. The first and immediate effect of the delegation was of course the moral boost to Chilean unionists. ‘The trade unionists we talked to were most encouraged by the unique solidarity shown by British trade unions’, said the delegates. Kelly, ‘Chile’, 16.
120 ILO, European Trade Union Council (ETUC), ICFTU and MIF. For a full list of recommendations, see: Delegation from the NUM to Chile and Bolivia 21st April – 7th May 1977 [draft?].
issue of puppet Chilean representatives at the international trade union level. It was recommended that contact be kept and strengthened with the FINM by inviting representatives to Britain. Money would be sent to the FINM. At length, they passed resolutions on the isolation of the junta and encouraged other unions to follow the example of the NUM in making direct contact with unions in Chile.121

The NUM considered the publication of the reports as a part of their commitment to the Chilean people.122 McKie said the report was compiled from the ‘sad material, the horrid material’ that the mineworkers had brought back from their journey. At the time, McKie said the editor of the Miner and the head of the Miners International Department had written the report, whereas Gatehouse remembered that Ann Browne was the author of much of it.123 Ted McKay confirmed Gatehouse’s recollections about Ann Browne in 2008: ‘now, we took all the praise after we got home, but it was Ann Brown [sic] who was the main stay of the delegation. She was also very knowledgeable about everything, although we took credit it was Ann who wrote our report.’124

Lawrence Daly sent a letter to Lionel Murray, the general secretary of the TUC, requesting that a copy of the booklet-like report be distributed to all affiliated unions, with instructions to order in bulk through the NUM headquarters.125 Orders of 10 or more would carry a 50 per cent discount. The NUM sent 700 copies of the report to the 1977 TGWU congress, because, said Daly, ‘we want everybody to read it’.126 They gave 1000 free copies to the CSC.127 More than 20 000 were distributed at the heavily subsidised price of 20 pence.128 The Miners International sent copies to all its English-speaking affiliates, and it was hoped that translations would be made for others. The Miners Parliamentary Group (BLP) circulated the report to ministers and the TUC International Committee discussed its findings.129

Lawrence Daly considered it to be ‘beautifully produced’ and ‘one of the most excellent reports that has ever been produced by a delegation of the National Union of Mineworkers’.130 The report was, of course, part of the educational drive of industrial national internationalism. It was an indirect action in an

122 CSCC 14.05.77 Minutes, 1977. ‘With its delegation, NUM contracted a long-term obligation and commitment which it has fulfilled magnificently.’ Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977.
123 National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1977, 469.
125 Daly (NUM) to Murray (CUT), 18th July 1977, TUC, MSS.292D/980.31/7, MRC, UW, Coventry.
127 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977.
128 Ibid.
129 National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1977, 467.
130 Ibid.
attempt to influence the political outcome in Britain, Chile and in other countries around the world. Gatehouse concurred with Daly, saying it was a decent and influential report. He continued: ‘It wasn’t greatly political but you know, it was fine. And in fact, curiously because’ the delegation members ‘were so right wing within the [NUM] they could sort of carry the whole union with them, although some of the left were very snooty about it’.131

Ken Hulme confirmed this view in his interview: ‘I have the highest regard for the commitment and work of the left of the trade unions but frankly it was far more effective to see people who were regarded as ordinary non-political trade unionists or right-wingers getting really angry about things. And that … was very effective.’132

To further harness the momentum, CSC affiliates were encouraged to invite the NUM delegation members to speak at their meetings or rallies.133 The delegation members received so many invitations to speak around the country that the NUM Executive agreed that all requests for them to speak should be handled through the head office to relieve the administrative pressure on the individuals and branches.134 McKay reported to the 1978 national conference that they had told the story of the delegation all over Britain. He said:

I, for example, have retold my story to meetings of what would be called the extreme left, extreme left students that were so far left they made Stalin look like Enoch Powell. I have also been across the spectrum of the left … when I retold the story from a pulpit in an Anglican church.135

Even further afield, Ken Toon travelled to Geneva to give evidence at the UN Commission on Human Rights Ad-Hoc Working Group.136 McKay went to Algiers to give testimony to the Commission of Enquiry into the Crimes of the Military Junta in Chile.137 The three men were sent by the NUM to a conference

131 Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
132 Hulme Interview, 2007.
133 CSCC 14.05.77 Minutes; Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
134 National Union of Mineworkers (UK), Annual Report and Proceedings for the Year 1977, 733. See, for example, Ken Toon speaking alongside Martin Flannery at a Joint Labour Movement event in Camden. ‘Report from Chile’, Tribune [UK], 17 June 1977, 11.
136 ‘Toon to Testify on Chile to UN Group’, Miner, July–August 1977, 1; National Union of Mineworkers (UK), Annual Report and Proceedings for the Year 1977, 706.
137 In January 1978, at the fifth session of the Investigating Committee of the Crimes of the Military Junta of Chile, evidence was given. National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1978, 307; Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977; ‘Former Miner Tells of Pinochet Horror’.
in November 1978 in Madrid. Ken Toon spoke at the trade union session there, calling on unions to ‘imitate NUM and establish relations with their equivalent unions in Chile’. The participation of these three men in the delegation enabled them to step above their actual place in the solidarity movement. They would otherwise have played a very peripheral role in Chile or international issues; but genuine belief or feeling and even direct experience did not grant them power within the labour movement structures. The TUC’s reaction to the NUM delegation, which it had barely encouraged in the beginning, was tepid. In 1977, Ken Toon moved a resolution on Chile and Bolivia at the TUC Congress, as was recommended by the delegation report. He called for an examination of trade, the credentials of the Chilean representatives at the International Labour Office (ILO), the development of stronger links with Chilean unions and lobbying for aid for Bolivian miners. A similar resolution was submitted to the BLP conference.

The correspondence about the delegation that was received by the TUC International Committee was summarised down to three sentences in the minutes. Action on the suspect ILO credentials of Chilean and Bolivian representatives would be ‘pursued as opportunity offered’. Inquiries were made and by the 5 December 1977 International Committee meeting, it was reported that the TUC was not ‘able to submit a formal complaint to the ILO against the government of an ILO member state other than the UK’. Such a complaint would have to come from the Chilean delegation. The best thing the TUC could come up with as a consolation was the fact that the ICFTU and the ILO were considering the information contained with in the NUM’s report for use in new or existing complaints against Chile and Bolivia. The TUC was not willing to push the NUM delegation’s results. The NUM’s fidelity to the

138 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report (London: Chile Solidarity Campaign, 1978); World Conference of Solidarity with Chile: Madrid, Nov 9–11, 1978, CSC, CSC/11/7, LHASC, Manchester.
139 World Conference of Solidarity with Chile.
141 Resolution submitted to the 1977 T.U.C. Congress by the National Union of Mineworkers, CSC, CSC/28/2, LHASC, Manchester. Further, Ken Toon appeared at the CSC fringe meeting held at the Old Ship Hotel, Brighton, that year, beside Norman Buchan (MP) and Carlos Parra (Chilean Radical Party). ‘CSC’, Tribune [UK], 30 September 1977.
142 Gormley (NUM) to Murray (TUC), 29th July 1977, TUC, MSS.292D/980.31/7, MRC, UW, Coventry.
143 TUC International Committee Minutes, June 28, 1977, TUC [BLP International Department], MSS.292D/901/11, MRC, UW, Coventry.
144 TUC International Committee Minutes, December 5, 1977, TUC [BLP International Department], MSS.292D/901/12, MRC, UW, Coventry; Report of the 111th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1978.
145 TUC International Committee Minutes, December 5, 1977.
146 A further outcome credited to the NUM delegation was opening Chile to other delegations. By breaking ground, it was argued, it made it much easier for delegations to enter and openly tour Chile. Indeed the delegation occurred immediately before a small burst of open opposition to the junta. In 1978 some brave workers celebrated May Day on the streets away from the protection of the Church, witnessed by Enoch Humphries of the STUC. National Union of Mineworkers (UK). NUM Annual Conference, 1978, 565.
industrial national model, their refusal to let the social movement run their
internationalist activism, their willing output of resources and efforts were not
rewarded by the upper hierarchy of the international structures.

The NUM continued its ‘exemplary work’ in follow-up for many years after
the delegation returned, which included maintaining contact with the FINM.147
There commenced a series of reciprocal delegations. In November 1977, Alamiro
Guzman, president of the FINM, visited Britain as a guest of the NUM.148
Guzman returned to Chile and became the first Chilean unionist elected before
the coup to travel abroad and return safely.149 Guzman was followed by Carlos
Pozo, who was the seventy-one-year-old treasurer of the FINM in 1978. He had
been imprisoned during the repression of the 1950s in Chile. He was a nitrate
miner and his wife died on a hunger strike demanding his release while he
was imprisoned.150 Gatehouse wrote that he was a ‘wizened old comrade with
an amazing sense of humour’.151 The NUM put money towards Pozo’s medical
expenses when he travelled to Hungary for treatment.152 After this he described
himself as ‘a new man’ and continued on to Britain.153 He visited Wrexham as
a guest of Ted McKay, as they had met when the delegation was in Chile. Pozo
confided in McKay that he had a sense of foreboding about returning to Chile.
‘He said we might never meet again. He feared the arrests might happen’, McKay
told the Evening Leader.154 Pozo was right to be frightened: he disappeared
when the offices of the FINM were raided on 20 October 1978.155 McKay travelled
to the Chilean Embassy in London to inquire after Pozo. Soon after, McKay went
as part of the British delegation to the Conference of Solidarity with the Chilean
People in Madrid, where he vowed to bring up Pozo’s disappearance.156

Around the same time, the FINM announced that Hector Troncoso was to be
their representative in Britain. The NUM reported that he was a refugee who
had ‘lived through the beating that he received at the hands of this regime’.157
Hernán Cofre flew from Santiago to join Troncoso and visited Nottingham,
South Derbyshire and Kent.

147 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1978.
149 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977.
150 Gatehouse to Collins, June 29 1979, CSC, CSC/28/19, LHASC, Manchester.
151 Ibid.
152 It is unclear exactly what Pozo was being treated for. Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity
153 Pozo’s journey was paid for by the CSC, NUM and the Hungarian Solidarity Campaign (SZOT). Gatehouse
to SZOT, February 24th 1979, CSC, CSC/28/19, LHASC, Manchester.
154 ‘Miners’ hero is missing in Chile,’ Evening Leader, November 9, 1978, CSC, CSC/28/19, LHASC, Manchester.
155 Ibid. There is a handwritten note on the photostat of this article in the archives that says ‘Mike not
maybe 100% true’.
156 Ibid.
Cofre’s suitcase went missing on the journey and he spent his time in Britain wearing the clothes of CSC campaigners and generous miners. He spoke at the NUM conference with Gatehouse translating: ‘Thank you, comrades, for listening to me and for the reception you have given me. It is really emotional for me … Thank you for giving two modest Chilean workers the opportunity to … join in fraternity with the workers of your country here.’

The NUM produced a pro-solidarity badge and sent thousands of FINM badges to Chile. It was even rumoured that Joe Gormley would visit Chile. In 1978 Hector Troncoso attended the Scottish Mineworkers’ Gala. ‘As usual’, reveals the CSC annual report of the Scottish gala, ‘a float was provided for the Chilean refugees to decorate, and a tent set aside for the Scottish Chile Defence Committee to mount an exhibition’.

Figure 3.1 Ted McKay, Ken Toon, Hernán Cofre, Hector Troncoso and Mike Gatehouse at the NUM Annual Conference, 1978.

Source: ‘Standing ovation at Torquay for Chilean miners,’ Miner, July/August 1978, CSC, CSC/7/14, LHASC, Manchester.

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159 Ibid., 567; ‘Standing ovation at Torquay for Chilean miners’.
161 CSC EC 1.8.78 Minutes. Cofre and Troncoso of the FINM invited him to come, but this time ‘via the front door’. ‘Standing ovation at Torquay for Chilean miners’; National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1978.
162 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1978. Gatehouse said that ‘many people like [McGahey] were extraordinary and did a huge amount for … the Chile Movement’. McGahey was a ‘severe’ man and a member of the CPGB Political Committee, and he was a strong supporter of Chile Solidarity, though was hardly ever directly involved with the London office of the CSC. Troncoso’s journey was the third time the Scottish Area NUM had invited a Chilean representative to their gala. Luis Corvalan was to attend the NUM gala in 1977, after they had hosted Cornejo in July 1976. They went on to host Rene Plaza in 1979. Milligan, The New Barons, 118–19; Gatehouse Interview, 2007.
The generosity of the NUM, and their ongoing relationship with Chile, was aimed at the FINM and its members, and as such, could be classified as bilateral internationalism. The FINM influence in Chile, on politics or working conditions was (during the 1970s) very weak, and thus NUM solidarity with them had little effect on the dictatorship or positive results for the Chilean people. The NUM delegation and their relationship with Chile were restricted by their form of organisation—that is, by the old forms of internationalism based on industrial national conceptions. They expressed their solidarity with their equivalent organisation rather than with the people or with a social movement. Even so, the delegation and the ongoing relationship with the FINM were substantial symbolic actions. The CSC noted the NUM’s ability to establish their own contacts with Chile as a ‘gesture of defiance to the dictatorships which want them completely isolated’.

Figure 3.2 Hector Troncoso, Mike Gatehouse and Mick McGahey at the head of the Scottish Miners’ Gala March.


Ted McKay was immensely proud and believed the whole union was behind the delegation: ‘When the NUM joined, with one voice, to face the common enemy of fascism … we showed the world what the Union stands for.’ Gormley listed the Chile delegation and subsequent interactions with Chilean miners as the high points of NUM internationalism in his time with the union.

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163 Given the standing ovations, and glowing reports of the NUM in the left press, it would be easy to assume that there was no opposition to the delegation. This was not so. See, for example: ‘What Were We Doing in Latin America?’, Miner, September–October 1977.
164 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Chile Solidarity Campaign: Annual Report, 1977.
166 Gormley, Battered Cherub, 189.
articulated similarly: ‘it is another expression of the British Miners Union’s belief in international solidarity’. And that expression was confined to and limited by the industrial national framework.

Of course, the NUM was not the only union which believed in internationalist rhetoric. Jack Jones said in 1975: ‘As democrats, we cannot rest while the inhuman regime in Chile continues its policy of imprisonment, of maiming, of killing those who it perceives as a threat, and while democracy is denied to the people of Chile.’

Jones travelled to Chile on two occasions, first in 1974 and subsequently in 1975. Jones’s moral authority stemmed from his long history of fighting fascism, including in the Spanish Civil War, and his years of solid leadership of the TGWU. The first trip was as part of an International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) mission that comprised Jones (then vice-president of the ITF) and four other members of the executive board.

The men set out from London on a British Caledonian flight, arriving at Santiago on 25 November 1974. They were escorted off the plane and told they would be taken directly to the office of Air Force General Diaz. As they walked across the tarmac and into the airport, they walked below the area where the public could view arrivals. Someone above shouted ‘Jack Jones!’, and as he looked up a note floated down. It was the name and address of a British Embassy official. The unionists were put into a limousine with air force officers accompanying them and escorts in front and behind.

The general told the delegates the mission would not be allowed to enter Chile to make investigations because it would interfere with the ILO Committee for Investigation and Conciliation on Matters of Trade Union Freedom which would soon arrive. The dates proposed and the interference by the ITF mission

167 Daly, in National Union of Mineworkers (UK), NUM Annual Conference, 1977, 467.
168 TUC, ‘Notes of Proceedings at a Conference on Chile held at Congress House’.
169 Jones was president of the International Brigade Memorial Trust. Jones, Jack Jones.
170 H. Aasarød (president, Norwegian Sailors’ Union), J. Post (vice-president, Transport Workers’ Union of Holland), D. Seacord (president, Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers’ Union), H. Lewis (assistant general secretary of the ITF). The men were accompanied by Ms J. Goodin, who served as an interpreter. To Jack Jones from Diaz Estrada, 26 November 1974, CSC, CSC/8/6, LHASC, Manchester; ITF Representatives refused permission to carry out mission in Chile, 1975, CSC, CSC/8/6, LHASC, Manchester.
171 Jones, Jack Jones, 290.
172 Ibid., 290.
173 There was a British member of that ILO delegation whose last name was Kirkaldy. He does not appear to have had any further engagement with Chile and was a relatively right-wing individual within the TUC. Diaz Estrada to Jack Jones, 26 November 1974, CSC, CSC/8/6, LHASC, Manchester; ILO commission sets date for Visit to Chile, 1974, TUC, MSS.292D/980.31/4/MRC, UW, Coventry; Duff to Murray (TUC), 21st April 1974, TUC, MSS.292D/980.31/4/MRC, UW, Coventry; Free Chile (September 1975), Papers of Gustavo Martin Montenegro [hereinafter Papers of GMM], Canberra.
‘would constitute an obvious undermining of [the Chilean] national dignity’. The ITF mission was invited to return on or after 20 December, after the ILO mission was successfully disposed of.

Jones only briefly described the meeting in his autobiography, but the reader gets the sense of the tension and mood of the general as he flipped between anger and placatory behaviour. At the end of the meeting, after the general had spent time defending the anti-labour movement actions of the junta, he was handed a list of disappeared transport workers. He did not react kindly. Jones persevered, and mentioned the names of two men he believed had been killed. While the general promised to investigate each of the men personally and report his findings to the ITF, Jones recalled that ‘the atmosphere became heated towards the end and his final words were that we must leave on the next plane’.

Jones thought they would be taken back to the airport, but the interpreter explained that the next plane would be in two days. They were accompanied to a hotel. Jones contacted the British Embassy official who had thrown down his details at the airport and they went into the centre of Santiago to meet the Interdenominational Peace Committee. Jones was moved by the people he met there; but it seems that this small foray onto the streets of Santiago was enough for the Chilean Government to find a plane on which to deport the unionists in less than two days. So, barely 24 hours into a five-day visit, the ITF delegation was sent on its way. ‘It was frustrating, but not entirely pointless’, Jones was reported as saying.

At the BLP conference just days after his return to Britain, he emphasised the need for the labour movement to unite behind the Chilean people; ‘Jack received an ovation’. The TGWU General Executive Council fully supported Jones’s part in the mission and gave him permission to return if another mission was organised. Jones spoke of his short time in Chile on various platforms, including the TUC-organised conference on Chile in April 1975. Pulling at the

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174 Diaz Estrada to Jack Jones, 26 November 1974.
175 The general’s ministrations were useless in this sense. The delegation left Chile and went directly to Lima (Peru), where they met the chairman of the ILO mission and told him what had occurred in Chile. Ibid.
176 Jones, Jack Jones, 291.
177 Ibid., 391. Lists appear in the archives (though it is unclear if this is a copy of the list Jones gave the general or a different one he obtained from the Peace Committee, or if these were one and the same). The attached refers to 205 Chilean trade unionists who were arrested, 1975, CSC, CSC/8/6, LHASC, Manchester; Jones (TGWU) to Murray (TUC), 15 January 1975, TUC, MSS.292D/980.31/3, MRC, UW, Coventry.
178 The final member of the delegation was Gleason from Canada. Gleason was, according to Jones, a close friend of George Meany, whose absence showed the lack of real support of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) for the Chile cause.
179 Jones, Jack Jones, 292.
181 Record, January 1975, p.3: ‘Chilean workers are not alone’, TGWU, MSS.126/T&G/193/1/55, MRC, UW, Coventry.
182 Minutes and Record of the General Executive Council, June 3, 1975, TGWU, MSS.126/T&G/1186/A/53, MRC, UW, Coventry.
conscience and provoking the outrage of his audience, Jones listed unionists executed in the first days of the coup. He said: ‘they will not regain their freedom, but there are hundreds here on this list who with our help and the help of the world trade union movement can yet regain their freedom.’

Jones’s second visit to Chile, in 1975, was as part of an ICFTU delegation, and lasted only nine hours. At the conference in Mexico City, Jones insisted that an ICFTU delegation visit Chile and demonstrate their solidarity with the oppressed labour movement. Though the congress voted for Jones to lead the delegation, he was adamant that Otto Kersten, general secretary of the ICFTU, lead the party. The delegates left from Mexico City to travel to Chile. After getting off the plane, Jones guided the delegation straight to the Peace Committee to renew his acquaintances there. This time, he was successfully able to meet with Cardinal Silva. Jones remembered in his autobiography: ‘It was a serious yet happy occasion, and I was proud to pin the badge of the International on his robe.’ Jones continued:

We were under close observation during the whole of our day in Santiago but that did not stop us passing and receiving messages to or from brave people who were operating illicitly and who were encouraged by our visit … It was at the airport, when we were going to catch our return flight, that the secret police showed their hand.

As they passed through customs, the delegation members were surrounded by armed guards. They were manhandled into a room on the side of the customs area. They separated off Jones and let the rest of the men go. It was still not clear what was going on and Jones’s colleagues started to create a ruckus outside the room. A Canadian diplomat who came to farewell the delegation started to make representations on his behalf.

The guards shuffled through Jones’s papers and then confiscated them. Jones was absolutely indignant, and as he was led out to the open area to rejoin his delegation, he shouted: ‘This is what the Fascists do to a visitor from a friendly country. They are thieves. They have taken my property!’ The police were no doubt happy to get rid of the delegation and Jones’s papers were returned three months later through the Foreign Office. Jones was reported as saying that the ICFTU delegation had ‘helped to identify the international trade union movement with the fight of Chilean workers and with the humanitarian efforts being made by the peace committee to help the wives and families of detainees’.

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183 TUC, ‘Notes of Proceedings at a Conference on Chile held at Congress House’.
184 Jones, Jack Jones, 293.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid., 239.
187 ‘Fight Chilean Fascism’, Record, November 1975, 6, TGWU, MSS.126/T&G/193/1/55, MRC, UW, Coventry.
As Jones reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the TGWU upon his return: ‘During the Mission’s visit he had been personally subjected to the Junta’s fascist activities, including having personal papers (since returned), taken from him.’

Despite Jones’s irritation at the abuse of his freedom, it does seem an exaggerated assumption to liken his experience to the oppression suffered by the Chilean left. Although his trips to Chile may have been bold international gestures, the lack of time and profound contact with the Chilean movement renders them as just that: gestures.

These gestures, however, seemingly simple and bureaucratically loose, had consequences that extended beyond Jones as an individual. One outcome of Jones’s travels to Chile stems from the confiscation of his papers. The abuse of his freedom was used as a reason by the ITF to call on all its affiliates to boost the harassment of Chilean transport from 1 January 1976. This gave fuel and support to boycott actions all over the world, including that which occurred in Australia (see Chapter Eight). Jones’s personal experiences ensured that the TUC was unable to ignore the Chile issue.

While the mineworkers were motivated by feelings against fascism and injustice, as well as feelings of working-class and trade union solidarity, Jack Jones sought to express his solidarity with the ‘Chilean people’. The NUM delegation was daring in some ways but exhibited limited flexibility to act outside structural and ideological restrictions. ‘It is’, said Jack Collins, ‘our working class duty to make sure that the nightmare that is now taking place in Chile and Bolivia, the nightmare that these people are living through, is ended forthwith in order that we can also share in the victory of that nightmare being brought to an end’ (emphasis added).

The NUM’s practical solidarity was, however, directed at an organisation rather than at miners or a class. They did not target solidarity with the workers or the ‘Chilean people’ in general, but with a select group of mostly incapacitated unionists. As Waterman suggests, solidarity committees often identify with

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189 ‘Harassment planned for Chile Junta’, Record, January 1976, 6, TGWU, MSS.126/T&G/193/1/56, MRC, UW, Coventry.


191 ‘Standing ovation at Torquay for Chilean miners’.

particular leadership claiming to be representative of workers rather than the real workers of the recipient country, and in this case, so did the union.\textsuperscript{193} The problem with this was the fact that the national-level FINM organisation was at that point largely redundant. They were persecuted, restricted and impoverished. Despite the international aid received, they remained so for some time.

The limitations of the NUM delegation were also in evidence when the TUC, its own trade union peak body, did not enthusiastically support it. The lacklustre adoption of the recommended courses of action is the case in point, and there was an uninspiring carriage through to international-level industrial national organisations. Their lack of a strategic individual in the TUC and faithfulness to the hierarchy of industrial national unionism hampered the overall influence of the delegation.

The CSC, a committee with little of the institutionalised power of the TUC, but with links to the most powerful labour movement groups in the country, ensured that the small NUM delegation enjoyed flexibility and fame beyond the borders of their own union. Travelling to give evidence on the international stage, interviewed about their experiences for years after, the three NUM members selected by Gormley achieved prominence above and beyond their union positions. As Gatehouse wrote: ‘we regard the work of NUM and of yourselves in particular as being an example to the whole of the rest of the trade union movement.’\textsuperscript{194}

In contrast, the relatively minor forays of Jack Jones to Chile had ramifications that outweighed their planning and implementation purely because of Jones’s stature. His union and political positions were what allowed him to act in this manner. Logue has noted: ‘In general, we can expect that the incidence of “parasitic elite activity” will be inversely related to the degree of democracy prevailing in the organisation.’\textsuperscript{195} Jones, who was elected for life, could partake in his international delegations with impunity: he was in a position that did not require him to account for his actions. His interest in Chile was not only backed by the name of the TUC and the ability to circumvent its oppressive committee structures and hostile employees, but also drew with it the ITF and the ICFTU. Amidst the abstract models of trade union international activity, historians and political scientists have often overlooked the role of the individual.

The NUM delegation, perhaps guided by their union’s own rule book, judged that the FINM would be the appropriate gateway through which their compassion and financial aid might be channelled. They pursued this vigorously and attempted to keep it distinct from any action of the CSC. In a different strategy,

\textsuperscript{193} Waterman, Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms, 135.
\textsuperscript{194} Gatehouse (CSC) to McKie (NUM), February 4th 1979, CSC, CSC/11/10, LHASC, Manchester.
\textsuperscript{195} Logue, Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism, 29.
Jones spent little time in Chile, but went straight to the heart of a Chilean-run organisation. The Peace Committee, of course, benefited from solidarity and funds, but it was not a direct result of them. In judging where aid and publicity would be most useful in resistance to the regime, Jack Jones chose the reality of a social movement organisation. The NUM members and their union chose to prop up a relic of the industrial national structure.

The real winner, in terms of organisational gain, was the CSC, which benefited with little effort from newsworthy events and capable speakers. The CSC did not begrudge the separation that the NUM felt necessary from the CSC. In fact, as the Glasgow Free Chile Committee had previously done with the East Kilbride boycott (Chapter Four), the CSC encouraged the activities of the unionists, who could be presented as nonpartisan and morally upright to a politically sensitive audience. Though Gormley had attempted to swing control away from the left in his choice of delegates, he actually helped the broad front of the CSC more than a left-wing delegation could have hoped.

It was very soon after his final trip to Chile that Jack Jones retired. At the function that the union held in honour of the occasion, Chilean band Mayapi provided the entertainment. Jones wrote to the CSC to thank them. Gatehouse replied that it was a ‘unique opportunity’ for the band, as they could play and pay tribute to the international work of Jones. It was a ‘very small way of saying thankyou for the tremendous contribution you have made to the struggle of the people of Chile’. Gatehouse continued that he hoped that during his retirement, Jones could return to Chile but under very different circumstances, and where there will be no DINA, but a ‘crowd of welcoming trade unionists to meet you at the airport’.

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196 Gatehouse to Jones, March 4 1976, CSC, CSC/1/16, LHASC, Manchester.
This text taken from *No Truck with the Chilean Junta!: